# The Communist Manifesto: Easy Read Edition

Original text by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1848

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# Editor's Note

We've tried to keep this easy read edition as true to the original meaning of text as possible, while only making the language easier to understand for a modern audience. At times we've needed to add explanations because some of the terms used had to be included, but might not be easily understood without the right knowledge of history or Marxist theory. All added explanations from the editor are inside round brackets (like so.)

# Glossary

These terms are all explained the first time they're used in the text, but are here for easy reference

- **proletariat**: the class that earns no income from capital and must sell its labour power to capitalists in order to live
- **proletarian**: a member of the proletariat
- **bourgeoisie**: the capitalist class; the class that earns its income from owning the means of production and exploiting the labour power of the proletariat
- **bourgeois**: capitalist
- **means of production**: the tools and raw materials used to create items
- **productive forces**: the means of production together with labour

# Preamble

The ghost of Communism is haunting Europe and all the major powers have joined forces to drive it out. The Pope, the Tsar of the Russian Empire, The Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, French Politicians, and German police spies all fight together in an effort to drive out the ghost.

Every party in Europe that opposes the existing governments has been called Communist. And every progressive has thrown the term Communism at their more radical opponents as an insult.

As the result of this, we can say two things:

1) Everyone in Europe recognises that the Communist movement is powerful; and

2) It's time for Communists to come out of the shadows and face their opponents openly. We should publish our aims and beliefs for all to see.

That's why Communists of many countries have met in London to write this manifesto, which we'll publish in English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish.

# Chapter 1: Capitalists and Proletarians

There has been class struggle in every society that has existed so far. Slaves and their owners struggled against each other. The Roman nobles and the Roman lower classes struggled against each other. Medieval lords and their serfs struggled against each other. And master craftsmen and their apprentices struggled against each other.

In other words, oppressor and oppressed have fought a constant battle against each other. Sometimes the struggle was quiet and undramatic. At other times, the class struggle has broken out into open warfare. When that happened, society was either transformed by the class that won the fight, or else everyone suffered miserably from the damage caused by the fighting.

In earlier eras of history, there was a complicated social hierarchy almost everywhere. In ancient Rome there were patricians, knights, plebeians, and slaves. In the Middle Ages, there were major lords, lords that served them, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, and serfs. There was also a hierarchy of seniority inside almost all of these classes.

Class struggle still exists in the modern, capitalist society that has replaced feudalism. The only thing that's changed is the classes that exist, how people are oppressed, and the way that the classes struggle against each other.

Our era, the era of capitalism, is different in one key way though. It has made the class struggle simpler by splitting most of society into only two classes. The two great classes that face each other today are the capitalists (who own the means of production and profit from exploiting the labour of others,) and the proletarians, (the wage working class who get no income from owning capital).

In the Middle Ages, some serfs became chartered burghers (citizens of a town who weren't serfs, and who were born inside marriage.) The Capitalist class started to develop from some of these townsfolk.

Europeans discovering the Americas and learning that they could sail around the Cape of South Africa, towards Asia, opened up new opportunities for the rising Capitalist class. They were able to trade with East India and China, colonise America, and trade with all the European colonies. These new opportunities for trade rapidly increased the importance of trade, and let the Capitalist class grow quickly inside their dying, feudal societies.

Under the feudal system,  commodities (goods made for trade) were made by craftsmen who belonged to guilds that regulated the price of goods. But that system of production wasn't good enough to satisfy all the trade that the new markets demanded. As a result, the guilds were pushed aside by a new class of manufacturers. Instead of different parts of goods being manufactured by different guilds, the whole process was brought inside single workshops.

Even as this process of manufacturing workshops replaced the guild system, the market for exports kept growing. These early manufacturing operations couldn't survive either. Soon, the invention of the steam engine transformed the manufacturing process. After that, the

industrial middle class was replaced by industrial millionaires, who employed armies of workers to manufacture goods using large machines. (Editor's note: because of inflation, a millionaire in the time that Marx and Engels wrote this was closer to being worth £100 million in today's money. The industrial millionaires are the people we'd think of as large capitalists.)

Starting with the discovery of the Americas, modern industry has created a global market. This market has led to developments in trade, navigation, and land based travel technology. That led to the further development of manufacturing industries. The more that industry and trade have grown, navigation has improved, and railways have been extended, the more the Capitalist class has grown and increased its wealth. As that has happened, it has pushed aside all the old classes of the Middle Ages.

We see then how the modern Capitalist class is the result of a long series of development, during which the methods of producing and distributing goods changed dramatically.

Each step in the development of the Capitalist class was matched by an advance in its political power. Here it was an oppressed class under the feudal nobility, then an armed, self governing medieval commune. Here an independent republic, as happened in Germany and Spain. There a taxable third class in society, as happened in France, (the first two classes being the nobility and the peasants.) Once the period of manufacturing was underway, it became a force that the monarchy could pit against the nobility in both the semi-feudal and absolute monarchies. In fact, the growing Capitalist class became the key power that the monarchy rested on. Finally, since it opened the world market and established modern industrial manufacturing, the Capitalist class has conquered exclusive political power for itself by establishing liberal democracies. The executive branch of the modern, liberal democracy is nothing more than a committee for managing the joint interests of the Capitalist class.

The Capitalist class has historically played a most revolutionary role.

Whenever the Capitalist class has got the upper hand, it has put an end to the old, romanticised patriarchal and feudal relations. It has torn apart the old hierarchies which said that some people were naturally above or below others, and has replaced the old social hierarchy with relationships based on cold, hard cash and naked self interest. It has got rid of romantic ideas about chivalry and religious idealism. It has created a world where personal worth is based on how much economic value you can produce. In place of a world where exploitation was hidden behind religious and other moral sounding justifications, the Capitalist class has created a world of open, shameless, and brutal exploitation, under the name of Free Trade.

The Capitalist class has stripped once highly regarded professions of the awed respect that people once had for them. The doctor, lawyer, priest, poet, and scientist have been converted into wage workers.

The Capitalist class has torn away the sentimental view of family relationships and has reduced the family to relationships based on money.

Reactionaries greatly admire the vigorous and heroic deeds of the Middle Ages, but the Capitalist class has shown how lazy and relaxed most life in the Middle Ages truly was. While people in the Middle Ages sometimes did extraordinary things, the Capitalist system has created wonders that far surpass the creation of the Great Pyramids, the Roman water systems, or the Gothic Cathedrals. It has gone on quests that are far more impressive than any medieval crusade.

The Capitalist class can't exist without constantly updating the tools and machinery used in production, and because of that it constantly changes the relationships that people have with each other as they produce, exchange, and distribute wealth. (The technical term for these relationships as a whole is the Relations of Production. That term is used in the original text). In all former Modes of Production, the existence of classes depended on the technology for producing remaining the same. That created a sense of certainty that we don't have in Capitalist society. In Capitalist society, the ways in which people produce are constantly updated and, because of that, the way that people live is always changing. Ever-lasting uncertainty is what makes this era different to all former ones.

The long lasting, fixed relationships between classes that existed under previous Modes of Production allowed people to build up deeply held beliefs about why things were the way they were. Today, the relationships that people have with each other as they produce, exchange, and distribute wealth become outdated before people have a chance to form deeply held beliefs about them. With no new beliefs that twist people's view of the relationships between classes, people are forced to look at the real life conditions that they face. And they're forced to look at the real nature of the relationships that they have with other people in the economy.

The need to constantly expand the market for its goods forces the Capitalist class to expand into all corners of the earth. It has to settle everywhere and form connections everywhere.

By turning the whole world into a market for its goods, the Capitalist class has given the world a shared culture of production and consumption. Upsetting reactionaries greatly, the Capitalist class has destroyed all the old national industries. All the old national industries have already been destroyed or are being destroyed with each passing day. They are pushed aside by new industries that don't only work using raw materials from their homelands, but materials from the remotest parts of the world. And the products of the industries aren't only consumed at home, but all around the world as well. Instead of being happy with only the products produced in their country as they used to be, people now demand products from all over the globe. Instead of nations being self-sufficient, now they're all dependent on each other. Even the knowledge and ideas of each country are shared globally. It's impossible for people to be narrow minded and only view things from the perspective of their own country, like they used to.

By rapidly improving the tools and machinery used in production, and by greatly extending the travel infrastructure, the Capitalist class draws even the most backward nations into the modern world. No nation can resist the cheap prices of manufactured products, and the Capitalists use that to get even the most reluctant countries to join the global market. They force these nations to become Capitalist themselves or risk getting wiped out. In that way, the Capitalists remake the world into a Capitalist one.

The Capitalist class has put the countryside under the power of the towns. It has created huge cities, whose population is much greater than the countryside. In that way, it has made large sections of the population better educated and more sophisticated than they would have been if they'd been isolated in villages. Just as the Capitalist class has made the country dependent on the towns, it's made the backward nations dependent on the advanced nations. It’s made the nations of peasants in the East dependent on the nations of Capitalists in the West.

The Capitalist class keeps getting rid of the scattered Means of Production. It has gathered the population and the Means of Production into small areas instead, and has centralised ownership of the economy into the hands of only a few people. The result of this had to be the centralisation of political power. Independent or only loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and tax systems, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one border, and one set of import taxes.

In its rule of barely a hundred years, the Capitalist class has created more gigantic industries than all previous generations put together. They've tamed the forces of nature, built machinery, and used chemistry to improve manufacturing and farming. They've created steam ships, railways, and electric telegraphs, cleared whole continents for use in commercial farming through colonisation and forest clearance, built canals and overseen the gathering of huge populations into cities. People in past centuries could never have imagined such industries and populations of workers.

We see that the Capitalist class built up its means of production and exchange while still existing within feudal society. At a certain stage of their development, the legal structure of feudal society got in the way of the new, capitalist means of producing and exchanging things. The feudal relations of farming and manufacturing didn't match the needs of the developing economy anymore, and held back its growth. When society reached that stage, the feudal order was overthrown.

The new order that the Capitalist class established was based on free competition, and had a political system which supported that. This system is one where the Capitalist class controls society.

A similar movement is happening before our eyes. Capitalist society has built such a gigantic system of production, exchange, and property rights that it's like they've summoned a monster that they can't control. For decades, the history of manufacturing and trade has been one of the modern productive forces rebelling against the system of property rights that forms the basis of Capitalist rule. (The term *productive forces* is the Means of Production, that is the tools and raw materials used in production, together with the labour force.) As evidence, we can look at the frequent economic crises that put the entire existence of Capitalist society on trial, each time more threateningly.

In these crises, not only do a large percentage of products on the market go to waste (because there's nobody to buy them), a large part of the productive forces are destroyed too (as businesses go bankrupt or downsize.) The kinds of crises caused by the Capitalist

system would seem absurd under earlier economic systems. Suddenly, society is plunged into an economic crisis that sends businesses bankrupt and sees workers lose their jobs. It's like society is being plugged into a famine. And why? Because too much has been produced. There are too many of the things necessary for life. There is too much available for trade.

The tools, raw materials, and labour power no longer serve to increase Capitalist private property. Instead, they've become too powerful for this economic system and are being held back by it. As soon as they overcome the limits of capitalist production, they bring disorder into the whole of Capitalist society and threaten Capitalist property. The conditions of Capitalist society are too restrictive to contain the wealth created by it. And how does the Capitalist class get over these crises? Partly by forcing the destruction of parts of the productive forces, partly by conquering new markets, and partly by exploiting existing markets more thoroughly. In other words, they deal with the crises by paving the way for larger and more destructive crises, and by eliminating things which prevent crises.

The weapons that the Capitalist class used to cut down feudalism now turned on the Capitalist class itself.

But not only has the Capitalist class forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the people who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the Proletarians.

To the extent that capitalism is developed, the proletariat develops in proportion to it. The proletariat is the modern working class: a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves daily, are a commodity, like every other product on the market. Because of that they are exposed to all the changing conditions caused by competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Due to the use of machinery and the division of labour into small tasks, work has lost much of its individuality and its appeal to the labourer. The person becomes an extension of the machine and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack that is required of them. Since there's no craft to learn, the cost of producing the worker is only the cost of keeping them alive and raising their replacement. The price of a commodity is only that of producing it, so the less enjoyable the work becomes, the more the wage paid for it goes down. Actually, the more machinery and the division of labour into smaller tasks is used in production, the more the burden on the worker increases, either because they're forced to work for longer or to work faster.

Modern Industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organised like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the Capitalist class, and of the capitalist state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the supervisor, and, above all, by the individual capitalist themself. The more openly this dictator of capital proclaims profit to be its aim, the more hateful and easier to resent it is.

The less the skill and strength needed in labour, in other words, the more modern industry is developed, the more women replace men in the workforce. Differences of age and sex have no longer any useful meaning for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex. (In the time that Marx was writing, it was common to openly pay women less than men and to hire children for lower wages still.)

As soon as the worker has finished being exploited in the factory, they're set upon by other sections of the Capitalist class: the landlord, the shopkeeper, and pawn broker etc.

The lower section of the middle class — the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradespeople generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants — all these sink gradually into the proletariat. Partly it's because the small amount of capital they have isn't enough to compete with modern large-scale industry. Partly it's because their specialised skills have been made worthless by the new methods of production. In this way, people from all classes of society become proletarian. (At the time of capitalism developing, the Capitalist class was known as the middle class, since it was viewed as being between the poor labourers and the aristocracy.)

The proletariat goes through several stages of development. At its birth, it begins its struggle with the Capitalist class. To start with, this struggle is between individual workers and their employers, then by the workers of a single workplace, then by the workers of an entire trade, in one place, against the Capitalists who directly exploit them. They direct their attacks not against the capitalist conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported goods that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories on fire, they seek to regain by force the lost status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage, the labourers still form a confused mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. To begin with, when the labourers come together for political ends, it's always because the Capitalists have organised it. They organise their workers against the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial Capitalists, and the petty bourgeois (the small capitalists who work for themselves and have at most a few employees.) In this way, the proletariat doesn't fight its enemy, Capitalism, but fights the enemy of the Capitalists. The whole historical movement of this phase is driven by the Capitalists and every victory won is a victory for their class.

But with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The conditions of life within the proletariat become equal as the use of machinery takes away the skill difference between the workers, and nearly everywhere wages fall to the same level. The growing competition among the Capitalists, and the economic crises that result from it, make the wages of the workers ever more unstable. The improvements of machinery, which get better at ever faster rates, makes the livelihood of the proletariat more and more unstable. The conflicts between individual workers and individual Capitalists become more and more like the collisions between two classes. The workers begin to form trade unions against the Capitalists; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they create

permanent organisations in order to make preparations beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real reward of their battles isn't the immediate result, but the constantly growing union of the workers. This union is helped by the improved methods of transportation that are created by modern industry, meaning that workers in different places can stay in contact with each other. This contact was needed to centralise the many local struggles, which are all of the same type, into one national struggle between classes. Thanks to the terrible highways that they had to rely on, the burghers (free citizens of towns) took centuries to form into a unified class, but thanks to the railways, proletarians can do it in only a few years.

This organisation of the proletarians into a class, and, because of that into a political party, is continually being taken off track by the competition between the workers themselves. But the union between them returns, even stronger than before. By taking advantage of different interests amongst the Capitalist class, the proletariat manages to get legislation changed to help its interests. This is how the ten-hours' bill was passed in England. (The ten-hours' bill, otherwise known as The Factory Act 1847, limited the working hours of women and children aged 13-18 in most textile mills to 10 hours a day, five days a week, and eight hours on Saturday.)

The collisions between the classes of the old society help to advance the cause of the proletariat in many ways. The Capitalist class finds itself in constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of its own class whose interests are getting in the way of developing industry. At all times it's in competition with the Capitalist class of foreign countries. In all these battles, it needs to ask the proletariat for help, and drags it into the political arena.  In this way, the Capitalist class itself gives the proletariat elements of political and general education. In other words, it gives the proletariat the weapons for fighting the Capitalist class itself.

As we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling class are lowered to the proletariat by the development of industry, or at least see their privileged positions threatened. These people supply the proletariat with fresh insights and help them advance.

Finally, at times when the class struggle is reaching a breaking point, the process of other classes being thrown down into the lower classes becomes so violent and obvious that a small section of the ruling class joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as in an earlier period when a section of the nobility went over to the Capitalist class, so now a portion of the Capitalist class goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the Capitalist ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of understanding the historical movement of change as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the Capitalist class today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is the special and essential result of modern industry.

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the Capitalist class, to hold onto their existence as parts of the middle

class. They are not revolutionary, but conservative. More than that, they are reactionary, since they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they only become so because they face the immediate threat of becoming proletarian. They decide to fight for their future interests as proletarians instead of their current interests as parts of the middle class.

The “dangerous class”, [lumpenproletariat] the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution. But its conditions of life usually make it more likely to be part of a bribed tool of reactionary (anti revolutionary) intrigue.

(The lumpenproletariat, as Marx thought of it, includes small-time criminals, beggars, prostitutes, the chronically unemployed, those who have become unemployable, and similar. Some people today feel that the term is insulting because it classifies marginalised people as lower than those able to engage in regular wage work. It seems that Marx's purpose in grouping these sections of the proletariat together was because they had different conditions of life from the regularly employed proletariat, and potentially had different motivations because of that. Marx abandoned the term by 1850. During the period of his career that Marxism properly emerged as a mature school of thought, the term lumpenproletariat had been replaced with the term “reserve army of labour”, to show that the group formed a backup labour force.)

Society has already been largely brought into the proletariat, to face its conditions. The proletarian doesn't own property. The relations of their family no longer have anything in common with the relations of families in the Capitalist class. In England, in France, in America, in Germany, everywhere the proletarian is a slave to modern industry and capital, and they no longer have a distinct national character. To the proletarian, law, morality, and religion are just things of the Capitalist class, which act like traps to enforce Capitalist interests.

Every class that has taken control of society before has imposed its present economic system on the whole of society. The proletarians can't take control of the productive forces of society without destroying their own condition as proletarians — that of propertyless workers who are dependent on working for a capitalist — and without destroying all production based on individual private property. They're not trying to secure their position in a rising economic order, but to destroy what came before.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest section of our present society, cannot raise itself up without throwing the whole of society, which rests on the capitalist economic base, up into the air.

Even if the whole capitalist system is its enemy, in practice, the struggle of the proletariat against the Capitalist class is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must first of all settle matters with its own Capitalist class.

In looking at the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less hidden civil war raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the Capitalist class lays the foundation for the rule of the proletariat.

Up until now, every form of society has been based on the opposition of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, you have to make sure that the right conditions are in place for it to be your slave. In the period of serfdom, the serf raised themself to membership in the commune, just as under feudal absolutism, the small capitalist managed to develop into the large capitalist. But instead of rising with the process of modern industry, the modern labourer sinks deeper and deeper below their previous level of existence. They become a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than the population and wealth. Here it becomes clear that the Capitalist class is no longer fit to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it isn't able to keep its slaves alive within their slavery, because it cannot help letting its slaves sink into such a state that it has to feed them instead of being fed by them. Society can no longer live under this Capitalist class, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential conditions for the existence and for the rule of the Capitalist class is the formation and growth of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The need for profit forces the Capitalist class to develop industry, and in doing so it brings the workers out of their isolation and into joint workplaces, where they become a revolutionary group. Because of this, the development of Modern Industry destroys the conditions that kept the wage labourer enslaved to the Capitalist class. Therefore, what the Capitalist class produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

# Chapter 2: Proletarians and Communists

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

You can tell the Communists apart from the other working-class parties by this only: 1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2) In the various stages of development which the working class has to go through in its struggle against the Capitalist class, Communists always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists are the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others. They also have the advantage over the great mass of the proletariat of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: the formation of the proletariat into a class, the overthrow of the Capitalist supremacy, and the seizing of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented by this or that would-be reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations of the existing class struggle, and the historical movement going on under our very eyes.

The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a unique feature of communism. Property relations have continually changed throughout history as conditions have changed. The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favour of capitalist property.

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of all property, but the abolition of capitalist property. But modern capitalist private property is the final and most complete system of producing and securing products that is based on class oppression, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: elimination of private property.

People have complained that we Communists want to abolish the right of personally acquiring property from the fruit of a person's own labour. That property, they say, is the basis of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do they mean the property of petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that came before the Capitalist form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has already mostly destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

Or do you mean the modern capitalist private property?

But does wage-labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. It creates capital, that kind of property which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase unless it gets a new supply of wage-labour to exploit. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage labour. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social *status* in production. Capital is a collective product, and can only be set in motion by the united action of the whole society. Capital is therefore not only personal; it is a social power.

When capital is converted into the common property of all members of society, people don't lose their personal property. It's only capitalist private property that's converted into property owned socially by all of society. It loses its class character.

Let us now take wage-labour.

The average price of wage labour is the cost of keeping the labourer alive and functioning. So what the wage labourer gets from their labour is merely enough to prolong and reproduce their existence. We don't mean to get rid of the labourer’s ability to earn a living through their work, and we don't want to give them the ability to gather wealth so they can exploit the labour of other people. All we want to do is get rid of the miserable nature of labour that exists under capitalism, where the labourer lives only to increase capital and is allowed to live only insofar as it helps the interest of the ruling class.

In capitalist society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society, accumulated labour is only a way to widen, to enrich, and to promote the existence of the labourer. (In Marxism, the term “accumulated labour” refers to labour that has already been used to create things useful to society. It is accumulated in those objects, which couldn't exist without the labour having been spent on them. Living labour is just what it sounds like: the active labour of the living worker. So Marx and Engels are saying here that the only purpose of labour under communism is to improve the lives of the working class, which is now the whole of society.)

In capitalist society, the present is controlled by the past, (because the capital produced in the past demands to be used in the present to create even more capital.) In Communist society, the past increases the freedom of choice in the present, (because without the laws of capitalism driving the economy, people can choose to do a wider range of things with their accumulated wealth.)

In capitalist society, capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent on it and has no individuality.

And the capitalist calls ending this state of things taking away individuality and freedom! Rightly so. The end of capitalist individuality, of capitalist independence, and of capitalist freedom is our aim.

Under present capitalist conditions, freedom means free trade, the freedom to buy and sell.

But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying also disappears. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other “brave words” of our capitalists about freedom in general, only have any meaning when contrasting things with the restricted buying and selling of the Middle Ages. They have no meaning when placed against the Communistic elimination of buying and selling, of the capitalist conditions of production, and of the Capitalist class itself.

You are horrified at our intention to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property has already been done away with for nine-tenths of the population. Its existence for the few is wholly due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. So you criticise us for intending to do away with a form of property that requires the immense majority of society to have no property.

In one word, you disapprove of us for intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that's just what we intend to do.

From the moment when labour can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolised, from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into Capitalist property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

Then you must confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the capitalist, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way and made impossible.

Communism deprives no person of the power to acquire the products of society; all that it does is to deny them the power to exploit the labour of others through using what they've acquired.

People have objected when private property is abolished, all work will end, and universal laziness will take over.

According to this, capitalist society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; because those of its members who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything do not work. The whole of this objection is just another way of saying that there can no longer be any wage-labour when there is no longer any capital.

All objections that have been made against the Communistic mode of producing and distributing material products, have also been made against the Communistic mode of producing and distributing intellectual products. In the same way that, to the capitalist, the

disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, the disappearance of class culture is identical to them with the disappearance of all culture itself.

That culture that the capitalist complains about losing is, for the enormous majority, mere training to act as a machine.

Don't debate with us if you want to apply your capitalist standards of freedom, culture, and law to our intended abolition of capitalist property. Your very ideas are just the outgrowth of the conditions of life created by your capitalist production and capitalist property, just as your legal philosophy is only the will of your class made into a law for all to obey. That will is shaped by your existence as capitalists.

Like all previous ruling classes, you present the social forms of the current economic system and property relations as eternal laws. While you can see that ancient property relations and feudal property relations had to end, you cannot admit it about your capitalist property relations.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

What foundation is the present family, the capitalist family, based on? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the Capitalist class. But this state of things ensured the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution. (The capitalist family is based on the inheritance of private property and the maintenance of class rule. Marx and Engels are saying here that only the families of the Capitalist class are based on maintaining wealth and power, because the vast majority of society has no property to pass onto their children. Because of this, members of the proletarian family have to be continually sold for a wage.)

The capitalist family will vanish as a matter of course when the proletarian family vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

You say that we destroy the most sacred of relations when we replace home education with social education.

But isn't education in capitalist society already influenced by the social conditions of the society it exists in? By school curriculums, existing social attitudes, and the like? The Communists have not given education a political character, informed by wider society; but we do seek to change the character of that education, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The more modern industry progresses and turns families proletarian, so that they have to sell their children's labour power like any other commodity, the more disgusting the capitalist claptrap about the sacred relations of the family becomes.

But you Communists would introduce the common ownership of women, screams the capitalist in chorus.

The capitalist sees his wife as a mere piece of property used in production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and naturally comes to no other conclusion than that women are to be exploited by all.

It doesn't even occur to him that the real point we aim at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our capitalist at the common exploitation of women, which they pretend is to be openly established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce it, as it has existed for almost as long as recorded history.

Our capitalist, not content with having wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other’s wives.

Capitalist marriage is, in reality, a system of wives in common and so all the Communists might possibly be accused of is the desire to introduce openly what is already happening unofficially. As for the rest, it is obvious that ending the present system of production must also end the communal use of women which comes from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

The Communists are further criticised for desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

The working people have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first rise to be the leading class, the dominant political power of their nation, must make themselves the nation, that far it is itself national, but not in the capitalist sense of the word.

National differences and active hostility between peoples are vanishing more and more because of the development of capitalism, free trade, the world market, and the similar conditions of life that it gives to people everywhere.

The supremacy of the proletariat will cause that hostility to vanish even faster. United action, of the leading developed countries at least, is one of the first conditions for winning the freedom of the proletariat.

The more we put an end to the exploitation of one individual by another, we will also put an end to the exploitation of one nation by another. In proportion as the hostile opposition between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical and from an ideological standpoint in general don't deserve serious examination.

Does it require deep intuition to understand that people's ideas, their views, their consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of their material existence, with every change in their social relations and social life?

History proves that the production and distribution of ideas changes its character in proportion as material production is changed. The ruling ideas of each age have always been the ideas of its ruling class.

When people speak of the ideas that revolutionise society, they're only expressing the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the burying of the old ideas keeps pace with the burying of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last days, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas were replaced in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary Capitalist class. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely gave expression to the influence of free competition within the domain of knowledge.

“Undoubtedly,” it will be said, “religious, moral, philosophical, and legal ideas have been changed in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change.”

“There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in opposition to all past historical experience.”

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has been the history of class struggle, struggle that has taken different forms in different eras.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages: the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the variety it displays, keeps within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish until the total disappearance of classes and class struggle.

The Communist revolution is the most radical break with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involved the most radical break with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the capitalist objections to Communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political rule to take all capital from the Capitalist class one piece at a time, and centralise ownership of all economic instruments of production into the hands of the state; in other words, in the hands of the proletariat organised as the ruling class. Then it will increase the productive forces as rapidly as possible.

To begin with, of course, we cannot do this without discarding the rights of property, and the normal conditions of capitalist production. That can make our actions seem inefficient and economically unworkable in the long term. But once started, our actions will force us to discard the old social order more and more, until we revolutionise the whole mode of production.

These measures will, of course, be different in different countries.

Nevertheless, in most advanced countries, the following will pretty generally apply.

1. Taking state ownership of all land and using rents generated from it for public purposes.

2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

3. Abolishing all rights of inheritance.

4. Confiscating the property of all emigrants and rebels.

5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.

7. Growing factories and increasing instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing of waste lands into cultivation, and the improvement of the soil generally in line with a common plan.

8. Enforcing that all who are able to work do so. Establishing groups of unemployed people who are available to labour where necessary, especially for agriculture.

9. Combining agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradually abolishing all the distinction between town and country by a fairer distribution of the population over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combining education with industrial production.

When class distinctions have disappeared and all production has been concentrated in the hands of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If its struggle against the Capitalist class forces the proletariat to organise itself as a class, and if it makes itself the ruling class through a revolution and sweeps away the old conditions of production by force, then it will have swept away the conditions that make class struggle possible, and will have destroyed classes generally. In doing so it will have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old capitalist society, with its classes and hostile opposition of class interests, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

# Chapter 3: Socialist and Communist Literature

## Reactionary Socialism

**Feudal Socialism**

Thanks to their historical position in society, the aristocrats of France and England took to writing pamphlets against modern capitalist society. In the French Revolution of July 1830, and in the English reform agitation that aimed to weaken the position of the aristocracy, these two countries' aristocracies again lost to the Capitalist class that they hated. After that, a serious political struggle was altogether out of the question. A literary battle alone remained possible. But even in the realm of writing, the old cries from the Stuart restoration of the monarchy had become impossible.

In order to gain sympathy for its views, the aristocracy had to pretend to lose sight of its own interests and to formulate their argument against the Capitalist class from the view of helping the exploited working class alone. So, the aristocracy took their revenge by creating harsh satires of their new masters and whispering in their ears scary predictions of coming disaster.

In this way arose feudal Socialism: half an expression of grief, half ridicule; half an echo of the past, half dire warning about the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and cutting criticism, striking the Capitalist class to the very heart's core; but always ridiculous in its effect, because of its total inability to understand the march of modern history.

The aristocracy, in order to rally the people to them, waved the proletarian begging-bag in front as its banner. But the people, just as often as it joined them, saw on their hindquarters the old feudal coats of arms, and deserted them with loud and disrespectful laughter.

One section of the French Legitimists and "Young England" are an example of just this.

In pointing out that their method of exploiting the workers was different to that of the Capitalist class, the feudalists forget that they exploited under circumstances and conditions that were quite different than those that exist today. In showing that, under their rule, the modern proletariat never existed, they forget that the modern Capitalist class is the natural outgrowth of their own form of society.

As for the rest, they do so little to conceal the reactionary character of their criticism that their chief accusation against the Capitalist class is this: that under the capitalist regime, a class is being developed which is destined to completely uproot the old order of society.

What they scold the Capitalist class with is not so much that it creates a proletariat as that it creates a *revolutionary* proletariat.

In political practice, then, they join in all coercive measures against the working class; and in ordinary life, despite their pompous phrases, they stoop to pick up the rewards created by industry, and to barter truth, love, and honour, for trade in wool, beetroot, sugar, and potato spirits.

Just as the parson has always gone hand in hand with the landlord, so has Clerical Socialism with Feudal Socialism.

Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity protested against private property, against marriage, against the State? Has it not preached that charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church should take the place of them? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest makes the heartburn of the aristocrat religious.

**Petit Bourgeois Socialism**

The feudal aristocracy was not the only class that was ruined by the Capitalist class, not the only class whose conditions of existence suffered a physical decline and perished in the atmosphere of modern Capitalist society. The medieval burgesses (free citizens of towns) and the small peasant proprietors were the starting point of the modern Capitalist class. In those countries which are only a little developed, industrially and commercially, these two classes still sit passively side by side with the rising Capitalist class.

In countries where modern society has become fully developed, a new class of petit bourgeois (small capitalist) has been formed, fluctuating between the proletariat and Capitalist class, and continually renewing itself as an additional part of Capitalist society. The individual members of this class, however, are being constantly hurled down into the proletariat by the action of competition. And, as modern industry develops, they even see the moment approaching when they will completely disappear as an independent section of modern society, to be replaced in manufactures, agriculture and commerce, by supervisors, bailiffs and shopkeepers.

In countries like France, where the peasants make up far more than half of the population, it was natural that writers who sided with the proletariat against the Capitalist class should use, in their criticism of the capitalist regime, the standard of the peasant and petit bourgeois. And from the standpoint of these intermediate classes, it was natural that they should take up battle for the working class. Like that, petit-bourgeois Socialism arose. Sismondi was the head of this school, not only in France but also in England.

This school of Socialism was insightful in its assessment of the contradictions present in modern production. It laid bare the hypocritical apologies of economists. It proved undeniably the disastrous effects of machinery and division of labour; that capital concentrates in the hands of a few; and that capitalist production leads to frequent crises that are brought on by overproduction. It pointed out the inevitable ruin of the petit bourgeois and peasant, the miserable conditions it creates for the proletariat, and the chaotic and unstable nature of an economy based on capitalist competition. It laid bare the huge inequalities in the distribution of wealth, the industrial war of extermination between nations, and the breaking apart of old moral bonds, of the old family relations, and of the old nationalities.

In its goals, however, this form of Socialism aims to either restore the old means of production and of exchange, and with them the old property relations, and the old society, or to place the modern means of production and of exchange within the framework of the old

property relations, which can't handle them without tearing apart. In either case, it is both reactionary and Utopian.

Its last words are: corporate guilds for manufacture; patriarchal relations in agriculture.

Ultimately, when stubborn historical facts had destroyed all heady self-deception, this form of Socialism ended in despair.

**German or “True” Socialism**

The Socialist and Communist literature of France, a literature that originated under the pressure of a Capitalist class in power, and that was the expressions of the struggle against this power, was introduced into Germany at a time when the Capitalist class, in that country, had just begun its contest with feudal absolutism.

German philosophers, would-be philosophers, and educated men, eagerly seized on this literature, only forgetting that when these writings immigrated from France into Germany, French social conditions had not immigrated along with them. Under German social conditions, this French literature lost all its immediate practical value and became something of purely literary value. So, the demands of the French Revolution and its ideals were adopted by the eighteenth century German, who treated these ideas as universally valid, and not springing from the specific conditions of the French Capitalist class during that time.

The work of the German scholars consisted solely in bringing the new French ideas into harmony with their own ancient philosophical values, or rather, in taking on the French ideas without letting go of their own philosophical point of view.

This adoption of ideas took place in the same way in which a foreign language is appropriated, namely, by translation.

It is well known how the monks wrote silly lives of Catholic Saints over the manuscripts on which the classical works of ancient heathendom had been written. The German scholars reversed this process with the unholy French literature. They wrote their philosophical nonsense beneath the French original. For instance, beneath the French criticism of the economic functions of money, they wrote “Alienation of Humanity”, and beneath the French criticism of the capitalist state they wrote “Dethronement of the Category of the General”, and so forth.

The introduction of these philosophical phrases at the back of the French historical criticisms, they called “Philosophy of Action”, “True Socialism”, “German Science of Socialism”, “Philosophical Foundation of Socialism”, and so on.

The French Socialist and Communist literature was thus robbed of all value. And, since the Germans had taken all expression of class struggle out of the literature, they felt aware of having overcome “French one-sidedness” and not of presenting needs of action, but of uncovering eternal truth. They weren't presenting the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the fantasy realm of the philosopher.

This German socialism, which took its schoolboy task so seriously and solemnly, and sold its poor ideas in such a deceptive fashion, gradually turned from naivety to become consciously reactionary.

The fight of the Germans, and especially of the Prussian Capitalist class, against feudal aristocracy and absolute monarchy, in other words, the liberal movement, became more committed to actually overthrowing the old order.

Through this, the long-wished for opportunity was offered to “True” German Socialism of confronting the political movement with the Socialist demands, of hurling the traditional denouncements against liberalism, against representative government, against capitalist competition, capitalist freedom of the press, capitalist legislation, capitalist liberty and equality, and of preaching to the masses that they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by this capitalist movement. German Socialists forgot that the French criticism, whose silly echo it was, presupposed the existence of modern capitalist society, with its economic conditions and political constitution — the very things that the Germans were still struggling to achieve.

To the absolute governments, with their following of parsons, professors, country squires, and officials, this criticism served as a welcome weapon to scare the Capitalist class with.

At the same time, these governments placated the workers with reforms after having beaten down their movements with brutality and bullets.

While this “True” Socialism thus served the government as a weapon for fighting the German Capitalist class, it, at the same time, directly represented a reactionary interest, the interest of German Philistines. In Germany, the petit bourgeois class, a relic of the sixteenth century, and since then constantly cropping up again under the various forms, is the real social basis of the existing state of things.

To preserve this class is to preserve the existing state of things in Germany. The industrial and political supremacy of the Capitalist class threatens it with certain destruction — on the one hand, from the concentration of capital; on the other, from the rise of a revolutionary proletariat. “True” Socialism appeared to kill these two birds with one stone. It spread like an epidemic.

The German Socialists sold their sorry “eternal truths” with fine words and high sounding ideas and speculations, to make them attractive to the public.

And on its part German Socialism recognised, more and more, its own calling as the loud and confident representative of the petit bourgeois Philistine.

It proclaimed the German nation to be the model nation, and the German petty Philistine to be the typical person. It gave a hidden, higher, Socialistic interpretation to every selfish and reactionary trait, the exact contrary of its real character. It went to the extreme length of directly opposing the “brutally destructive” tendency of Communism, and of proclaiming its supreme and impartial contempt of all class struggles. With very few exceptions, all the

so-called Socialist and Communist publications that now (in 1847) circulate in Germany belong to the domain of this foul and lifeless literature.

## Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism

A part of the Capitalist class wants to address social complaints in order to secure the continued existence of capitalist society.

This is includes the economists*, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, sobriety fanatics, and reformers of every kind imaginable. This form of socialism has even been worked out into complete systems. (*This is referring to economists in the sense that we use the word today, not people who follow the political thought of economism, which is discussed in other marxist works.)

Proudhon's *Philosophy of Poverty* is one form of this.

The Socialistic capitalist wants all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and dangers that result from it. They desire the existing state of society, minus the elements that are revolutionary and pull it apart. They wish for a Capitalist class without a proletariat. The Capitalist class naturally understands the world in which it rules to be the best one; and Capitalistic Socialism develops this comfortable idea into various more or less complete systems. In requiring the proletariat to carry out such a system, which marches them into a social utopia, it requires that the proletariat remains within the limits of existing society, and that it should cast aside all its hateful ideas concerning the Capitalist class.

A second, and more practical, but less systematic, form of this Socialism sought to cast shade on every revolutionary movement in the eyes of the working class, by showing that no mere political reform, but only a change in the material conditions of existence, in economic relations, could improve their situation. While seeking changes in the material conditions of existence, this form of Socialism doesn't understand the need to abolish capitalist relations of production — an abolition that can be affected only by a revolution. Instead it advocates for administrative reforms, based on the continued existence of capitalist relations of production. These reforms in no way affect the relations between capital and labour, but at the best lessen the cost, and simplify the administrative work, of capitalist government.

Bourgeois Socialism reveals its true, toothless nature when it becomes a mere figure of speech.

Free trade: for the benefit of the working class. Protective duties: for the benefit of the working class. Prison Reform: for the benefit of the working class. This is the last word and the only seriously meant word of bourgeois socialism.

It is summed up in the phrase: the capitalist is a capitalist — for the benefit of the working class.

## Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism

We're not referring here to that literature which, in every great modern revolution, has always given voice to the demands of the proletariat, such as the writings of Babeuf.

The first direct attempts of the proletariat to reach its own goals, made in times of universal upheaval, when feudal society was being overthrown, predictably failed, because of the undeveloped state of the proletariat as well as the unsuitable economic conditions for its liberation. These conditions that had yet to be produced, could only be produced by the coming Capitalist epoch. The revolutionary literature that accompanied these first movements of the proletariat of course had a reactionary character. It preached universal frugality and social levelling in its crudest form.

The Socialist and Communist systems of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen, and others, sprung into existence during the struggle between the proletariat and Capitalist class in the early, undeveloped period which we described above.

The founders of these systems see the hostile opposition between classes as well as the action of the existing classes falling apart in their current form of society. But the proletariat, as yet in its infancy, looks to them like a class without any historical initiative or any independent political movement.

Since the development of class hostilities develop at the same pace as the development of industry, the economic situation, as they find it, doesn't seem to offer any chance for the proletariat to liberate itself yet. These Socialists therefore search after a new social science, after new social laws, that are able to create these conditions.

Instead of historical development leading to change, these Socialists thought they would invent the new society themselves. Instead of conditions developing that would allow the workers to liberate themselves, these Socialists would do it with their wild plans. The gradual, spontaneous development of the proletariat into an organised class would be replaced with a society invented by these creators. In their eyes, the future would be shaped by them propagandising and putting their plans for society into effect.

In forming their plans, they care chiefly for the interests of the working class, since it is the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them.

The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, causes Socialists of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all hostile opposition between classes. They want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. So, they habitually appeal to society at large, without the distinction of class; no, they even appeal primarily to the ruling class. For how can people, once they understand their system, fail to see that it's the best possible plan to create the best possible society?

So, these Socialists reject all political, and especially all revolutionary action. They want to reach their goals, which are necessarily doomed to failure, by peaceful means and by the force of their example.

Such fantasy-like pictures of future society, painted at a time when the proletariat is still in a very undeveloped state and has only a wild view of its own position, matches with the first instinctive yearnings of that class for a general reordering of society.

But these Socialist and Communist publications also contain some critiques. They attack every principle of existing society. Because of this, they are full of the most valuable materials for the education of the working class. The practical measures proposed in them — such as the elimination of the distinction between town and country, of the family, of private individuals doing business for profit, and of the wage system, the announcement of social harmony, the conversion of the function of the state into a mere manager of production — all these proposals point solely to the disappearance of hostile class oppositions which were, at that time, only just cropping up. These publications recognised these problems only in their earliest indistinct and undefined forms. Because of that, the solutions they put forward are of a purely Utopian character.

The significance of Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism lost significance as the historical development of society continued. In proportion as the modern class struggle develops and takes definite shape, these fantasy filled attacks on it lose all practical value and all theoretical justification. So, although the creators of these socialist systems were in many ways revolutionary, their disciples have formed mere reactionary sects. They hold onto all the original views of their masters, ignoring the progressive historical development of the proletariat. They constantly try to deaden the class struggle and to reconcile the opposition between classes. They still dream of experimental realisation of their social Utopias, of founding isolated colonies, and to complete all these castles in the sky, they have to appeal to the feelings and purses of the Capitalist class. By degrees, they sink into the category of the reactionary or conservative Socialists depicted above, differing from these only by more systematic obsession with their own ideas, and by their fanatical and superstitious belief in the miraculous effects of their social science.

They, therefore, violently oppose all political action on the part of the working class; such action, according to them, can only result from blind unbelief in their program.

The Owenites in England, and the Fourierists in France, respectively, oppose the Chartists and the Réformistes.

# Chapter 4: Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties

Chapter 2 has made the relations of the Communists to the existing working-class parties clear, such as the Chartists in England and the Agrarian Reformers in America.

The Communists fight for the immediate aims, for imposing the momentary interests of the working class; but they also represent and take care of the future of their movement. In France, the Communists ally with the Social-Democrats against the conservative and radical Capitalist class, but insist on the right to take up a critical position in regard to phrases and dreams traditionally handed down from the great Revolution.

In Switzerland, they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of hostile elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, and partly of radical Capitalists. (The Democratic Socialists “in the French sense” are roughly equivalent to modern Democratic Socialists. They were reformers who wanted socialist economic reforms.)

In Poland, they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846.

In Germany, they fight alongside the Capitalist class whenever it acts in a revolutionary way against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy (class of landowners), and the petit bourgeoisie.

But they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the opposing class interests between Capitalist class and proletariat. That way the German workers can immediately use the social and political conditions that the Capitalist class has to introduce as weapons against them when the battle against the reactionary classes is won. The workers can begin the battle against the Capitalist class straight away.

The Communists turn their attention primarily to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a Capitalist (i.e a liberal) revolution that is sure to be carried out under more advanced conditions of social development and with a much more developed proletariat than that of England was in the seventeenth, or France in the eighteenth century. Also because the Capitalist revolution in Germany will be immediately followed by a proletarian revolution.

In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.

They bring the question of property ownership to the foreground in all of these movements, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

Finally, they work everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.

The Communists refuse to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!